Research: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea bury the body of Jesus

John 19:38-42

38¶ And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

“*Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly* — Because he durst not openly profess his faith in him; *for fear of the Jews* — And their rulers, who were so strongly prejudiced against him. This man, acknowledging Christ even when his chosen disciples forsook him, *besought Pilate that he might take away the body*— To preserve it from future insults, and to bury it in a decent and respectful manner. *And Pilate gave him leave —*As soon as he was assured by the centurion who guarded the execution that Jesus was actually dead. *He came, therefore*— Being thus authorized by Pilate; *and took the body of Jesus*— That is, took it down from the cross, with proper assistance. *And there came also Nicodemus*— Another member of the sanhedrim, of whom repeated mention has been made in the preceding narrative; *who at the first*— At the beginning of Christ’s public ministry; *came to Jesus by night*—and being now grown more courageous than before, and to testify his great regard for Jesus, he brought with him *a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight —*According to Josephus, great quantities of spices were wont to be used by the Jews for embalming a dead body, when they intended to show marks of respect to the deceased” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

39And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*.

“*Nicodemus*. Another coincidence. Nicodemus also was a member of the Sanhedrin, and his acquaintance with Joseph is thus explained. And it is S. Mark who tells us that Joseph was one of the Sanhedrin, S. John who brings him in contact with Nicodemus. It would seem as if Joseph’s unusual courage had inspired Nicodemus also. We are not told whether or no Nicodemus had ‘consented to the counsel and deed of them.’  
  
*“at the first*. Either the first time that he came to Jesus, in contrast to other occasions; or simply at the beginning of Christ’s ministry.   
  
*“myrrh and aloes*. Myrrh-resin and pounded aloe-wood, both aromatic substances: Aloes are not mentioned elsewhere in N.T. The purpose of this large quantity was probably to cover the Body entirely.   
  
*“about an hundred pound*. 1200 ounces. There is nothing incredible in the amount. It is a rich man’s proof of devotion, and possibly of remorse for a timidity in the past which now seemed irremediable: his courage had come too late” (Cambridge Bible, www.biblehub.com).

40Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

“It seems Joseph and Nicodemus intended to embalm our Lord’s body in a more exact manner as soon as the Sabbath was over; hoping that, in the meantime, the spices lying near the body might preserve it from all taint of corruption. “Those who have written upon the manners and customs of the Jews tell us, that they sometimes embalmed their dead with an aromatic mixture of myrrh, aloes, and other gums or spices, which they rubbed on the body, more or less profusely, according to their circumstances and their regard for the dead.

“After anointing the body, they covered it with a shroud, or winding-sheet, then wrapped a napkin round its head and face, others say, round the forehead only; because the Egyptian mummies are observed to have it so; last of all, they swathed the shroud round the body as tightly as possible, with proper bandages made of linen. At other times, they covered the whole body in a heap of spices. From the quantity of myrrh and aloes made use of by Joseph and Nicodemus, it would appear that the office performed by them to their Master was of this latter kind; for they had not time to embalm him properly.”

“They seem, however, to have done all that was usual in such circumstances to persons of wealth and distinction, which, as well as the sepulchre itself, agreed to Isaiah’s prophecy, [Isaiah 53:9](http://biblehub.com/isaiah/53-9.htm)” (Benson Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

41Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

“John alone tells us of the "garden;" and he clearly saw the significance of the resemblance to the "garden" where Christ agonized unto death, and was betrayed with a kiss, and also to the garden where the first Adam fell from the high estate**” (**Pulpit Commentary, [www.biblehub.com)](http://www.biblehub.com)).

**“**“There was in the place,” *i.e.*, in that neighbourhood, a garden, which, according to [Matthew 27:60](http://biblehub.com/matthew/27-60.htm), must have belonged to Joseph. a tomb, rock-hewn according to Synoptists, which had hitherto been unused, and which was therefore fresh and clean” (Expositor’s Greek Testament, www.biblehub.com).

42There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation *day;* for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre—The choice of this tomb was, on their part, dictated by the double circumstance that it was so near at hand, and by its belonging to a friend of the Lord; and as there was need of haste, even they would be struck with the providence which thus supplied it. "There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jew's preparation day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." But there was one recommendation of it which probably would not strike them; but God had it in view.

“Not its being "hewn out of a rock" (Mr 15:46), accessible only at the entrance, which doubtless would impress them with its security and suitableness. But it was "a new sepulchre" (Joh 19:41), "wherein never man before was laid" (Lu 23:53): and Matthew (Mt 27:60) says that Joseph laid Him "in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock"—doubtless for his own use, though the Lord had higher use for it. Thus as He rode into Jerusalem on an ass "whereon never man before had sat" (Mr 11:2), so now He shall lie in a tomb wherein never man before had lain” (Jamieson-Faucett-Brown, www.biblehub.com).